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SERIOUS ANSWERS TO CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS. Selected Chapters taken from a Hand-book on Practical Pedagogics for the Home. By Rudolph Penzig, Ph.D., Dozent at the Humboldt Academy in Berlin. Ferd. Dümmler, Publisher. 1897. Pp. 248.

This book—a series of chapters on Home Ethics—comes to us from Germany, and should be welcomed as a refreshing sign of reaction against the centralization of education and the scientific method, which entirely leaves out moral instruction in the scheme of school-life.

The author has been a teacher, and is equipped for his task by a careful training in pedagogics, which, together with his insight into children's ways and sympathy with children's problems, combine to make his work a suggestive and helpful one. It must be admitted that the pedagogic style is a little too frequently used, and the temptation of the teacher to pour forth information is occasionally apparent. But the sympathetic disposition evinced, and the evident desire to pluck the heart from out the difficulty, hold our respectful attention, and even when we dissent from his conclusions, and do not agree with his elaborate philosophical theories, we are, nevertheless, stimulated by the spirit and earnestness he displays. Though these subjects have been treated before, there is still much need of enlightenment in regard to topics which are usually shifted from the home to the school, and by the school are relegated back to the home, or else are neglected and slurred over by both. And some of the questions which the author considers are not brought up at all, or left to chance treatment that is, at best, unsatisfactory and vague.

Such, for instance, are the questions relating to sex and marriage, the problem of social distinctions, the ethical value of property, the child's attitude to the lower animals, and the importance of an ethical code for the school,—all of which are treated in separate chapters of this book.

In the department of child study the questions of children have received considerable attention, but the emphasis has been laid upon the questions, and the answers to be given have not been quite so seriously considered. Here now, in this book, the text is given by the child; his questions supply the starting-point, and the author preaches the sermon, which is interesting, thoroughly suggestive, and full of good points, and which the parent can take home with him, to apply and expatiate upon in his own way when his experi-

ence requires. The importance of the child's questions—how they should be encouraged, not repressed—is the author's first point and a good one, one that innumerable parents have still to learn. The child's first questions reveal its curiosity in regard to the great world which it has but just discovered, and it turns to its parents and to all those that can satisfy this instinct. Most of all is it concerned to know the uses of objects, and what advantages it can derive from them; and, in this connection, the author cautions parents against the danger of fostering selfishness in a child by referring all objects to its own needs. But it seems to us that this danger is only a remote one, for a child that recognizes the universal advantages of objects, and is taught that not he alone, but all can use them, will learn comradeship and brotherhood rather than selfishness. Is not this one of the beautiful lessons of the kindergarten, where the child is taught that the flowers, the birds, the sunshine are for the happiness of all?

Dr. Penzig suggests an ingenious explanation for the troublesome question which puzzles many conscientious parents, "Who made this?" The child, having learned that most of the household articles are produced by persons, is apt to ask the same question in regard to natural phenomena: "Who makes the thunder and lightning?" Now the child wants to know only the immediate logical cause of an effect, not its primary cause. And if we teach it to ask "How has this come to be?" and give him the simplest natural explanation of such phenomena as thunder, lightning, etc., he will ask for no personal cause. Thus undesirable and premature religious instruction is unnecessary, and the child is content to know how phenomena are produced without requiring any supernatural agency. What the child wants is a logical answer, one that will satisfy his intense desire to know how objects are made, how effects are caused. Even a deeply-religious parent when asked by the child "Who makes the watch?" will answer "the watchmaker" and not "God." Why then should we not always seek to answer the child as logically; and instead of answering by offering the child a new puzzle give him the most natural, simple explanation? Very often, indeed, as the author suggests, the convenient answer "God" may be used to conceal the gaps in the parent's knowledge of the cause of natural phenomena, and therefore he would have parents endeavor to instruct themselves so as to be able to answer their children.

These first questions: "What is it?" "How made?" "What

for?" "Whence?" "Why?" are the passwords which every living being needs to possess in order to enter freely the domain of Nature. And these questions the author endeavors to show us how to answer.

It is self-evident that the child must not be so dealt with, that it cannot distinguish between the serious answer and the joking and chaffing one. Children resent the teasing replies by means of which many ill-advised people amuse themselves; such teasing is generally one-sided and, in many instances, is positively harmful. The child must be able absolutely to rely on the answer. And so we must endeavor to answer truthfully and seriously even the most delicate questions. Such questions as those regarding sex, marriage, and birth, come to all parents. They are answered in a most admirable manner and with more downrightness and common sense than we have been accustomed to expect from the Germans, who have disregarded the advice given them by one or two of their most eminent educators, Jean Paul pre-eminently. The successful disposition of this difficult problem is revealed as a possibility, the complete solution of which will depend on the skill of the parent and the nature of the child's extraneous influences.

No student of children's questions can afford to leave out that ever recurring, most perplexing question, "Why?" Dr. Penzig points out how the question should be answered when it is considered legitimate. He quotes Preyer, who says: "The questions of the child are seldom correctly appreciated as a most valuable means of educating it. The desire to learn causality, which develops with great force as speech is acquired, and the almost insatiable desire to know why, is fully warranted, and should not, as is too often the case, be suppressed, ignored, or wrongly answered."

This question also leads to some very sensible utterances by the author in regard to the attempt to preserve the infallibility of parents. And some very good things are said on the vexed subject of the unquestioning obedience of children. We cannot forbear quoting what is said about breaking the child's will, for there are parents who still dwell in the benighted land where the phrase "breaking the child's will" is heard. "This question always comes too late. When we must break something, it proves that it has become too hard to be bent. And that the question of breaking the child's will can come up at all reveals to us that the early education, the training of the infant, has been neglected. Whoever, for the sake of comfort or good nature, yields to all the baby's

whims and desires, buys years of uneasiness and care for the sake of a few quiet hours. The will of the child must be trained, not broken. An energetic, strong, and unbroken will, will be developed when parents and educators have understood how to preserve the right measure in bending the young will, without undue severity, and without expecting blind, unreasoning obedience."

The most difficult problem, however, which the educator has to face is to answer the question, Why should I obey? "A satisfactory reply to this would require no less than to find a basis for morality itself, and not merely a theoretical but a practical and pedagogical one. If we realize that there are endless compendiums on the basis of ethics, but not one complete hand-book of ethics treated independently of philosophical, religious, or metaphysical bias, we can judge which is the more difficult. Our task, in one word, is to make clear to an untrained mind the reasons for being under an obligation to act in one way or another, so that the will is intelligently able to acquiesce in such action."

In attempting to solve this, as he realizes, trying and delicate problem, the author seeks to cover ground which is beset with difficulties, and, to our thinking, he has not been so successful as in other parts of the book. The effort to find a basis for the moral law in the child's own consciousness, and to bring that home to the youthful mind, is one that comes dangerously near the line which marks off pedantic theory from practical common sense. To familiarize the child with the abstract results of metaphysical theorizing may be the hobby of a school of modern thinkers. To us it does not seem feasible, the danger being that it is apt to lead to priggish conceit and unclear thinking.

The dialogue with which Chapter III. is concluded, and which the author seems to indicate also must conclude the child's struggle, is a specimen of the impossibility of this task,—that of satisfying by discussion on abstract principles the concrete question mentioned above. Is the child's mind able and prepared to discover the basis for moral actions, to distinguish such actions, and decide that it is willing to subordinate its own desires to the moral axioms developed by metaphysical abstractions? We are not inclined to think so.

We are thankful for the answers given us in Chapter IV., which, of all the chapters of the book, might be termed the most practical and most applicable to the needs of parents of whatever creed or nationality. The position of children in the family, the relations

of sisters and brothers, of children to servants and inferiors are discussed. Especially the difficult questions of property rights in the nursery, of class distinctions, and how to eradicate or rather prevent class feeling, are dwelt upon. We cannot but be impressed by the fine spirit of the author, who is free from that weak sentimentality which is often exhibited by those who object to social distinctions; for he is not tempted to go to the extreme of assuming the complete equality of men in all respects. It is interesting and significant to note that the spectre of the social revolution, which stalks abroad and will not be exorcised, appears most frequently to our author. It is a spur to his conscience and will not give him peace. We trace its influence in many of his remarks. For instance, "The thought that, at least, two-thirds of the pauper class are the victims of social conditions, approved or at least permitted by us, that the remaining third is but partially to blame for its own troubles; that very often they suffer for the social sins of their and our progenitors; that finally almost nobody can be safe from the danger of himself or his descendants joining the proletariat—all this should induce us to look upon pauperism as a misfortune rather than a retribution."

How to prevent conflicts between children in regard to property, leads to an elaborate investigation into the origin of property in the nursery, and as to the possibility of eliminating the idea of property and making children communists, the conclusion being that this would be impossible. The evil results of property, dissensions among children, the adoption of force as opposed to right, etc., are carefully treated. "Teach the child that never, under any circumstances, can might overcome right," with references to the need of Peace Societies, etc., recalls the German whose children have, indeed, before them those object lessons that demonstrate the very opposite of this teaching. The treatment of class distinctions, the child's relations to the servants, etc., are most interesting, and deserve to be heeded and studied by all parents, not alone those of European children.

The child's question, "Why don't I go to Public School?" leads to the discussion of the shortcomings of the Public Schools of Germany. Many of the remarks on the responsibility of parents for the defects of the schools applies in a remarkable degree to our own condition. "Why complain of the schools," the author says, "when you do not do your share to improve them? Send your own children there; and, if every one will do so, it will

not be long before you can have better teachers, smaller classes, properly paid masters. If the instruction be not good enough for your own children who are to have higher education, how can it then be sufficiently good for the workman's children whose only opportunity for an education is here given. For the people the schools are good enough! Then those men have lived in vain who worked for popular education and to whom you raise monuments, as for instance Comenius, Pestalozzi, Fichte, von Stein."

Fully as we assent to this criticism of the parents, nevertheless we cannot agree with the author as to the remedy. "We cannot wait until the Public Schools are improved, and are made the very best schools. Whatever I can do must be done, and, above all, my own child must be there to play, to learn to work, and, if need be, suffer with the others. Children are not my toy, not my property. They have a mission. May they learn betimes to fulfil this mission of being comrades of the people!" Beautiful and noble as the spirit is that prompts such an utterance, it must not lead us to forget that the child is also a trust and that the parent dare not use it, if it be to its own detriment, as a social missionary. The interest in social reform must not lead to such extremes. In our own country, however, such a difficulty need not arise. The Public Schools that are defective can be made what they ought to be if men will but organize to crush the power of political control. Then all classes will send their children to the common schools, as is done in every place where they are satisfactory. In Germany, where the control by the autocratic power of the government is so much stronger, to appeal to the democratic spirit of the citizen may not be of much avail; but it is the proper method of stimulating Americans, and therefore we wish that the ringing words of the author on this subject might be widely read on this side of the Atlantic.

The problems of man's relation to Nature, to the mysteries of sickness and death are fully and carefully treated. We can follow the exhaustive study of this subject with interest; but we cannot agree with the author in his deductions, and are obliged to repeat what was said before. The ambitious child may, perchance, listen to his disquisition, and imagine that it can follow him; but is it not true that such moral instruction, based on natural evolution, is apt to be misleading? Indeed, the whole school of modern evolutionists seem to go wrong when they try to show that the course of natural development and that of moral evolution are parallel.

And, even though the child should be able to pick up some few crumbs of information, how can they be applied and be of any use in solving the problem? The larger application of the facts of natural evolution do not fall within the province of the child's mind. Take, for instance, the fact that the destructive, cruel element in Nature is so wide-spread. That thought troubles the child. Can we remove it, as Dr. Penzig would attempt, by pointing out the evolution of man, and showing that man's nature also has developed from primitive fierceness to present conditions? If the child asks, "Why is the tiger so cruel? why is the cyclone so fearful?" we cannot answer him and satisfy his mind by bringing before him the picture of man's relation to the order of the Universe.

And, when the supreme questions of death and immortality are raised, would parents be willing to carry on such philosophical discussion as Dr. Penzig seems to consider useful? Are they not futile, in view of the child's immaturity and inability to comprehend these problems?

But it seems ungrateful to dwell on a few errors of judgment, when there is so much solid excellence. The book, as a whole, is sure to call forth earnest commendation; and serious parents will find so much to praise, and so many points of agreement with the author, that the objections raised do not in the least invalidate our praise.

Space forbids a detailed criticism of the remaining chapters. Though both interesting and valuable, we must be content with a cursory glance at the rest of the book. The relation of the child to society proves a most interesting subject for discussion, and the convictions of the author are clearly and boldly enough set forth. His preoccupation with the questions of social reform is again unmistakable, and we are impressed by the sincerity and high-mindedness of the student who realizes all the pathos of the unfortunate classes of society, and who will have us teach the child to distinguish between true worth and mere social position. However universal the need of this doctrine, it is most called for at present in Germany, where class distinctions are so patent and so hard to overcome. "To be sure," he says, "every one ultimately finds out that the honest man need not care for class distinctions, that the husk is distinct from the kernel. But why should we wait till the experience of life has taught this truth? Why should not the child learn this early? Why should he be taught the very opposite in his school days?"

Some of the other questions treated by the author are : the child's understanding of pauperism ; how to teach charity to children ; true love of country ; the child's idea of criminals, of the police and punishment ; boys and military service ; and, lastly, the relation of the children of free-thinking parents to the church—the child's idea of God. All of these chapters will be found most interesting, notably the one on the Child's relation to Society.

The answers to the remaining questions are consistent, and all indicate an ideal, conscientious nature. Whether we entirely agree with all of them or not, we must respect the author's convictions, and realize that those who will read so earnest and painstaking a writer will reap the advantage of thinking seriously and carefully themselves on many subjects which, in the hurry and aimlessness of modern life, are rarely dwelt upon as they ought to be.

HELEN ADLER.

NEW YORK.

THE PHILEBUS OF PLATO. Edited with Introduction, Notes, and Appendices, by R. G. Bury. Cambridge: University Press, 1897. Pp. lxxxvii., 224.

Unlike many editions of classical texts, Mr. Bury's "Philebus" meets a real want. There are few dialogues of Plato that have more interest for the philosopher than the "Philebus," and there is hardly one, with the exception of the "Laws," which presents more problems to the textual critic. It is perhaps in consequence of these linguistic difficulties that, with the exception of the edition of Poste and the two brilliant but erratic recensions of Badham, most of the work that has been done by English scholars on this most important dialogue consists of translations and essays on special points, which, however valuable, scarcely fill the place of a really comprehensive edition of the *Ur-Text* itself. Classical scholars and students of philosophy must, therefore, alike feel grateful to Mr. Bury for giving them in the present work an edition of the "Philebus" which is at once eminently scholarly and eminently philosophical. Of the purely critical side of Mr. Bury's work this is hardly the place to speak at any length, even were the present reviewer more competent to appraise it than he feels himself to be. It may, however, just be mentioned that Mr. Bury's text is avowedly "eclectic," and disagrees in two most important respects from the principles of the Cobetian school of criticism which is mainly represented, where Plato is concerned, by the editions of Schanz.